

National Docent Symposium 2017

Tours for the Visually Impaired at the San Antonio Museum of Art

Sample Object Description



***Runnin' Out
the Storm***

John Gutzon
Borglum
American, ca.
1890
Oil on canvas

You are before a large oil painted by Gustav Borglum, the artist who designed Mount Rushmore. This oil is clearly not as immense as his famous South Dakota mountain sculpture of presidents, but measures up a fair size, 5 feet high by 9 feet wide, a popular size for an area rug.

The title of this painting, *Runnin' Out the Storm*, gives a clue as to what is taking place. Borglum captures the desperate scene of a terrible storm coming rapidly across a vast mountain range with six horses pulling a stagecoach down a steeply curved mountain path, half running, half breaking so as not to go out of control, down the incline as two drivers with their whips, and probably their voices, urge them on. As you witness this dangerous descent, you can hear the thunder booms and the lightning cracks, the harnesses jingling, the leather reins scraping, the wheels of the carriage crunching and creaking along the dusty trail, the horses breathing heavily, their hooves striking the parched hard road, the sound of pebbles loose and flying into the brush and trees alongside the perilous drop off of the mountain. You would surely hear and feel the gusts of wind that muffle the drivers yelling at the team of six. Although not visible, you might imagine that inside the carefully decorated stage coach there are passengers quite alarmed by the speed, gasping loudly and calling for help at the lurching, rolling and bumping of the coach as it seems to be on the brink of going out of control. You are breathless too.

This imposing rug-sized painting depicts storm clouds, dark and billowing coming in from the upper left of the painting. Tall trees which have grown below the frost line frame the left side of the painting. Traversing the top from left to right along the 6-foot expanse is the sky with the rapidly moving clouds. Just below the sky are miles and miles of distant large mountain peaks, grey and dark. They have little

detail as they are so far distant, but you are impressed by the vastness and wildness of this mountain range.

The stagecoach and team of six horses emerge just left of the trees and extend to about three fourths of the way across a light sandy colored mountain road that pitches down to the right. On either side of this road are boulders of various sizes marking the edge of both sides of the road.

In the foreground, you can see a shallow drop off, stones, boulders and undergrowth. This is a painting that has so much movement and danger, that you think if you turn your head and see it again in another instant, the horses and coach might have flown by and you would then only see the rocking of the coach, hear the distant rumbling of its wheels, sense the darkening of the sky, and probably, feel the hard drops of rain hitting you.

Sample Music Selection



The Lansdowne Marcus Aurelius

Roman, 140–150 CE

Marble

- *The Forum* – Jeff Beal (<https://youtu.be/Qf4NGEibHgl>)
- *Legacy of Rome* – Andreas Waldtoft (https://youtu.be/2DD_NR8flpw)
- *I pini della Via Appia* – Ottorino Respighi (https://youtu.be/TQwGTe_MueM)
- *Grand March* – Giuseppe Verdi (<https://youtu.be/TX0qN6QEvGg?t=50s>)

Sample Scent Selection



Atlantean Figure

Maya/Toltec Culture, ca. 900–1150 CE

Limestone with traces of pigment

All scents are from Demeter Fragrance (<https://demeterfragrance.com>)

- Holy Smoke
- Sassafras
- Chipotle
- Dark Chocolate

Commentary: The Mesoamericans were extravagant with incense, burning it 9 times a day. They manufactured ornate vessels in which to burn it. Large braziers called *Tlexictli*, or “fire navels” provided continual light, warmth, and a place to burn copal. Another type of ladle-like incense burner was held in the hand and used in various motions during ceremonies to direct the sweet smoke towards its intended recipients.

Additionally, fragrant oil massages were a common form of therapy applied in the sweat lodges called *Temazcallis*.

Online Resources

- **San Antonio Museum of Art – Visually Impaired Tours Guidelines**
 - <http://samuseum.org/files/ndsviguide.pdf>
- Guiding a Person with a Visual Impairment
 - <http://www.ncbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Guiding-a-Person-with-a-Vision-Impairment-WORD.pdf>
- [VIDEO] Sighted Guiding – How to Help Blind and Partially Sighted People, pt. 1
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEoY6NeISs4>
- American Foundation for the Blind – Learning About Blindness
 - <http://www.afb.org/info/for-employers/visual-impairment-and-your-current-workforce/learning-about-blindness/345>
- American Foundation for the Blind – Statistical Snapshots
 - <http://www.afb.org/info/blindness-statistics/2>
- Miami Lighthouse – Community Mobility for the Visually Impaired
 - <http://www.miamilighthouse.org/Docs/CommunityMobilityForTheVisuallyImpaired.pdf>
- Guide Dogs for the Blind - Blindness and Guide Dog Etiquette
 - <https://www.guidedogs.com/explore-resources/general-information/blindness-and-guide-dog-etiquette>
- Art Beyond Sight – Verbal Description Database
 - <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/mei/verbal-description-training/samples-of-verbal-description/>
- Writing About Art – Visual Description
 - <http://writingaboutart.org/pages/visualdesc.html>
- Wikipedia – Audio description
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio_description
- American Council of the Blind – The Audio Description Project
 - <http://www.acb.org/adp/ad.html>
- WikiHow – How to Describe a Color to a Blind Person
 - <http://www.wikihow.com/Describe-a-Color-to-a-Blind-Person>
- [VIDEO] Describing Colors as a Blind Person
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59YN8_lg6-U
- Waunakee Community School District – Sensory Words
 - <http://www.waunakee.k12.wi.us/faculty/lcarothers/EffectiveWriting/Descriptive/Sensory%20Words.pdf>
- Descriptive Words
 - <http://descriptivewords.org/>
- Tara McCarthy - Descriptive Writing
 - <http://gec.kmu.edu.tw/~lc/ecorner/eBook/Descriptive%20writing.pdf>
- Sensational Books!
 - <http://www.sensationalbooks.com/>
- National Federation of the Blind Online Store
 - <https://ecommerce.nfb.org>
- Demeter Fragrance
 - <https://demeterfragrance.com/>

- **Surveys have terrific value.**

- Tour participants will respond to surveys with online forms emailed to them, or with an easy-to-remember URL to complete the survey at home at their leisure. This provides excellent source of data.

A suggested sample survey you might use:

-- Which date/tour did you attend? _____ Based on this tour experience:

- -- did you enjoy your visit to the San Antonio Museum of Art? YES ____ NO ____
- Was your overall appreciation of the art enhanced? YES ____ NO ____
- Did you believe the tour was well-researched? YES ____ NO ____
- Did you believe the tour was well-designed? YES ____ NO ____
- Did you believe the tour was well-presented? YES ____ NO ____
- Do you have suggestions for how we may improve this tour? NO ____ YES ____:

- -- Do you think the use of scent was beneficial? YES ____ NO ____
- Do you think the use of sound was beneficial? YES ____ NO ____
- Do you think the use of touchable props was beneficial? YES ____ NO ____
- Do you believe the docents were attentive to your needs? YES ____ NO ____
- Would you return to the San Antonio Museum of Art? YES ____ NO ____
- Would you recommend this tour to visitors with vision impairments? YES ____ NO ____

--Were the museum galleries difficult to navigate through? ____ YES ____ NO

- -- Please provide any additional thoughts you may have regarding your experience at the San Antonio Museum of Art.

A wonderful book on how to adapt exhibits to visually impaired guests:

“A Toolkit for Interactive Exhibitions for the Partially Sighted and Blind”

By Nicola L Krause

Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, University College of London, Sept. 2004